

Tavistock Methodist Circuit – At Home Service – Sunday 12th December, 2021

3rd week of Advent. (Prepared by Prim Skedgell)

Call to worship:- (taken from Zephaniah 3 v.17) The Lord your God wins victory after victory. **He is always with us.** He celebrates and sings because of you. **He will refresh us with His love.** We proclaim the good news of repentances and forgiveness as we wait for Jesus to come.

We look today at what happens when we do things that let God down. We'll find out about some people who were happy and who came home when God forgave them and some people who changed the ways they lived after they'd said sorry to God and found His forgiveness. We'll then think about the wrong things we do that let God down, but He forgives us and helps us to live in the way He wants us to live.

Read:- Psalm 126 - Find your Bibles and keep them with you

Hymn – Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes, the Saviour promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne, and every voice a song.

He comes the prisoners to release, in satan's bondage held;
The gates of brass before Him burst, the iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure;
And with the treasures of His grace to enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace, Thy welcome shall proclaim;
And heaven's eternal arches ring with Thy beloved name.

Prayer – Father, our great Lord God, Your eyes are open day and night watching your children; Your ears are always ready to listen to their prayer. We have come to worship You. We come as sinners, in need of Your forgiveness. We come tired from our work, in need of refreshment and recreation. We come with worries, in need of Your guidance. But first, please lift us out of our preoccupation with our own needs. Allow us to see You with the eyes of faith, and to hear with understanding what You say to us. Make us thankful for all the good we have received from You. Awaken in us a longing to do what is right, and make us aware of the great company, past, present and to come, with whom we join to worship You. Amen.

We share together – **The Lord's Prayer**

Find your Bible and read **Zephaniah 3 vs. 14-20 and Luke 3 vs. 4-7**

Hymn:- Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free,
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art,
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born, Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us for ever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Reflection –

Zephaniah is not a book that we look at very often! Nevertheless it is part of our Bible and one of the passages suggested for thinking about today – the third week of Advent.

Zephaniah belonged to the royal house of Judah. He was prophesying in the reign of Josiah (640-609 BC), a time of religious renewal for the people, and in this 3rd chapter, he speaks of a time when Jerusalem is punished for refusing to fear God, and how the city is purified, the people live very selfish lives, but now, their enemies have been defeated, God has saved them, they have repented and looked back to God.

'Celebration' and 'shout out' – vs.14 – Zephaniah tells the people their punishment is over, their enemies will retreat, God will return and live with His people – sing, be glad, rejoice.

'King' – vs.15 – God would be their King, they didn't need to worry any more, their troubles would be over.

'Fear' – vs.16 - The people wouldn't need to be afraid any more, or worry about what was going to happen next.

'Love' – vs.17 – God would comfort His people with His love. The children sing sometimes – 'My God is so big, so strong, so mighty, there's nothing that He cannot do' – words that are so true. He can defeat their enemies. He will comfort all the people with His love, because they pleased Him. He takes great pleasure because of them.

'The whole world' – vs.19 – The whole world would know that God loves His people. Their enemies would be defeated. The lame and outcasts whom everyone has despised would be praised. All the people of Jerusalem and Judah would be able to celebrate because God had forgiven their sins and brought their time of sadness to an end.

'Coming home' – vs.20 – The Lord promised that because He had forgiven them, He would take His people back to their home. He tells them that they will see Him with their own eyes and that they will tell Him that they love Him. The people can trust this promise because it is God Himself who has made it.

In the New Testament reading, **(Luke 3 vs.7-18)**, John the Baptist told the people about what Jesus was coming to do. Zephaniah promised that one day people would see God with their own eyes – this came true because those who saw Jesus, saw God with their own eyes. John the Baptist told people they had to get ready for Jesus to come by showing they were sorry for their sins. Those who had two coats were told to give one away. Those who had lots to eat were told to share it with those who were hungry. The tax collectors were told not to charge people more than they owed. The soldiers were told not to force people to pay them in order to be left alone.

We are in Advent, getting ready for Christmas, to celebrate Jesus' coming, we need to get ready by saying sorry to Him for the wrong we've done. If we do, we too can shout and celebrate just like the people of Jerusalem and Judah were told to do. Then God will refresh us with His love, like He did for them. But we also need to do what John the Baptist said – we need to do something to show that we are sorry for our sins. We need to ask God for strength to live in a way that He wants us to, faithfully following Him and obeying His commands. And let's say thank you to Him for refreshing us with His love. The shepherds were described as 'the first Apostles of His infant fame' – let us point to Jesus each day of our lives.

In my life Lord, be glorified, be glorified. In my life Lord, be glorified today.

In Your church Lord, be glorified, be glorified. In Your church, Lord, be glorified today.

God bless you all. Amen.

This came up on my Facebook page the other day – the Lord speaks even through Facebook! Thank You Lord for all the prompts that You bring into our lives.



Hymn:- The King is among us, His Spirit is here, let's draw near and worship, let songs fill the air.

He looks down upon us, delight in His face, enjoying His children's love, enthralled by our praise.

For each child is special, accepted and loved, a love gift from Jesus to His Father above.

And now He is giving His gifts to us all, for no one is worthless and each one is called.

The Spirit's anointing on all flesh comes down, and we shall be channels for works like His own.

We come now believing Your promise of power, for we are Your people and this is Your hour.

The King is among us, His Spirit is here, let's draw near and worship, let songs fill the air.

Prayers of confession and intercession:- Our Father we come to You now to acknowledge our many shortcomings and ask for Your forgiveness. Please forgive us Father. We pray that we, like the people we read about in Zephaniah, may know Your forgiveness and may be able to praise You and thank You and celebrate Your love for us.

We bring before You Lord those who are fearful regarding many things - health– especially regarding Covid.... Those who are mourning the loss of loved ones, especially as we come

closer to Christmas when the separation is more acute.... Those who are in difficult and abusive relationships with no way out.... Those who have to make difficult decisions and don't know which way to turn.... Those who have worries regarding money and how to make ends meet.... Lord, we pray that you will prompt us in our responses to the needs of others, keep us on our needs for our neighbours; touch our pockets Lord that we may give from our hearts and prompt us to stand alongside those who are finding life difficult in any way.

We bring to You too Lord, those who are persecuted in so many areas of our world because they love You. We do pray Father that they will know Your love and peace as many spend time in prison, falsely accused; we pray for their families who suffer persecution too and so often various members of families don't know where other members are, sometimes for a number of years, not knowing whether they are dead or alive. Father, hold them in Your arms, give them Your peace and minister to them.

We pray Lord, that each of us may be light, love, hope and peace to those with whom we rub shoulders. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

Hymn:- O Thou who camest from above the pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love on the mean altar of my heart!

There let us for Thy glory burn with inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return, in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire to work, and speak, and think for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire, and still stir up Thy gift in me –

Ready for all Thy perfect will, my acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death Thy endless mercies seal, and make the sacrifice complete.

Blessing – God out into the world in peace. Be brave; keep hold of what is good; never pay back wrong for wrong; encourage the faint-hearted; support the weak and the distressed; give due honour to everyone. Be always joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens; for this is what God in Christ wills for you.

Amen.